

Assembly Constitutional Amendment No. 15

RESOLUTION CHAPTER 88

Assembly Constitutional Amendment No. 15—A resolution to propose to the people of the State of California an amendment to the Constitution of the State, by amending Sections 1, 6, 8, 10, 15, and 16 of, amending and repealing Section 23 of, and repealing Section 5 of, Article VI thereof, relating to court consolidation.

[Filed with Secretary of State June 27, 2002.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

ACA 15, Wayne. Court consolidation.

The California Constitution provides for the division of each county into municipal court districts, but also provides for the abolition of municipal courts within a county, and for the establishment of a unified superior court for that county, upon a majority vote of superior court judges and a majority vote of municipal court judges within the county. By July 2001, all 58 counties had merged the superior and municipal courts.

This measure would delete obsolete references to municipal courts from the California Constitution and make conforming and related changes.

Resolved by the Assembly, the Senate concurring, That the Legislature of the State of California at its 2001–02 Regular Session commencing on the fourth day of December 2000, two-thirds of the membership of each house concurring, hereby proposes to the people of the State of California that the Constitution of the State be amended as follows:

First—That Section 1 of Article VI is amended to read:

SEC. 1. The judicial power of this State is vested in the Supreme Court, courts of appeal, and superior courts, all of which are courts of record.

Second—That Section 5 of Article VI is repealed.

Third—That Section 6 of Article VI is amended to read:

SEC. 6. (a) The Judicial Council consists of the Chief Justice and one other judge of the Supreme Court, three judges of courts of appeal, 10 judges of superior courts, two nonvoting court administrators, and any other nonvoting members as determined by the voting membership of the council, each appointed by the Chief Justice for a three-year term pursuant to procedures established by the council; four members of the State Bar appointed by its governing body for three-year terms; and one



member of each house of the Legislature appointed as provided by the house.

(b) Council membership terminates if a member ceases to hold the position that qualified the member for appointment. A vacancy shall be filled by the appointing power for the remainder of the term.

(c) The council may appoint an Administrative Director of the Courts, who serves at its pleasure and performs functions delegated by the council or the Chief Justice, other than adopting rules of court administration, practice and procedure.

(d) To improve the administration of justice the council shall survey judicial business and make recommendations to the courts, make recommendations annually to the Governor and Legislature, adopt rules for court administration, practice and procedure, and perform other functions prescribed by statute. The rules adopted shall not be inconsistent with statute.

(e) The Chief Justice shall seek to expedite judicial business and to equalize the work of judges. The Chief Justice may provide for the assignment of any judge to another court but only with the judge's consent if the court is of lower jurisdiction. A retired judge who consents may be assigned to any court.

(f) Judges shall report to the council as the Chief Justice directs concerning the condition of judicial business in their courts. They shall cooperate with the council and hold court as assigned.

Fourth—That Section 8 of Article VI is amended to read:

SEC. 8. (a) The Commission on Judicial Performance consists of one judge of a court of appeal and two judges of superior courts, each appointed by the Supreme Court; two members of the State Bar of California who have practiced law in this State for 10 years, each appointed by the Governor; and six citizens who are not judges, retired judges, or members of the State Bar of California, two of whom shall be appointed by the Governor, two by the Senate Committee on Rules, and two by the Speaker of the Assembly. Except as provided in subdivisions (b) and (c), all terms are for four years. No member shall serve more than two four-year terms, or for more than a total of 10 years if appointed to fill a vacancy.

(b) Commission membership terminates if a member ceases to hold the position that qualified the member for appointment. A vacancy shall be filled by the appointing power for the remainder of the term. A member whose term has expired may continue to serve until the vacancy has been filled by the appointing power. Appointing powers may appoint members who are already serving on the commission prior to March 1, 1995, to a single two-year term, but may not appoint them to an additional term thereafter.



(c) To create staggered terms among the members of the Commission on Judicial Performance, the following members shall be appointed, as follows:

(1) Two members appointed by the Supreme Court to a term commencing March 1, 1995, shall each serve a term of two years and may be reappointed to one full term.

(2) One attorney appointed by the Governor to a term commencing March 1, 1995, shall serve a term of two years and may be reappointed to one full term.

(3) One citizen member appointed by the Governor to a term commencing March 1, 1995, shall serve a term of two years and may be reappointed to one full term.

(4) One member appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules to a term commencing March 1, 1995, shall serve a term of two years and may be reappointed to one full term.

(5) One member appointed by the Speaker of the Assembly to a term commencing March 1, 1995, shall serve a term of two years and may be reappointed to one full term.

(6) All other members shall be appointed to full four-year terms commencing March 1, 1995.

Fifth—That Section 10 of Article VI is amended to read:

SEC. 10. The Supreme Court, courts of appeal, superior courts, and their judges have original jurisdiction in habeas corpus proceedings. Those courts also have original jurisdiction in proceedings for extraordinary relief in the nature of mandamus, certiorari, and prohibition. The appellate division of the superior court has original jurisdiction in proceedings for extraordinary relief in the nature of mandamus, certiorari, and prohibition directed to the superior court in causes subject to its appellate jurisdiction.

Superior courts have original jurisdiction in all other causes.

The court may make any comment on the evidence and the testimony and credibility of any witness as in its opinion is necessary for the proper determination of the cause.

Sixth—That Section 15 of Article VI is amended to read:

SEC. 15. A person is ineligible to be a judge of a court of record unless for 10 years immediately preceding selection, the person has been a member of the State Bar or served as a judge of a court of record in this State.

Seventh—That Section 16 of Article VI is amended to read:

SEC. 16. (a) Judges of the Supreme Court shall be elected at large and judges of courts of appeal shall be elected in their districts at general elections at the same time and places as the Governor. Their terms are 12 years beginning the Monday after January 1 following their election,



except that a judge elected to an unexpired term serves the remainder of the term. In creating a new court of appeal district or division the Legislature shall provide that the first elective terms are 4, 8, and 12 years.

(b) Judges of superior courts shall be elected in their counties at general elections except as otherwise necessary to meet the requirements of federal law. In the latter case the Legislature, by two-thirds vote of the membership of each house thereof, with the advice of judges within the affected court, may provide for their election by the system prescribed in subdivision (d), or by any other arrangement. The Legislature may provide that an unopposed incumbent's name not appear on the ballot.

(c) Terms of judges of superior courts are six years beginning the Monday after January 1 following their election. A vacancy shall be filled by election to a full term at the next general election after the second January 1 following the vacancy, but the Governor shall appoint a person to fill the vacancy temporarily until the elected judge's term begins.

(d) (1) Within 30 days before August 16 preceding the expiration of the judge's term, a judge of the Supreme Court or a court of appeal may file a declaration of candidacy to succeed to the office presently held by the judge. If the declaration is not filed, the Governor before September 16 shall nominate a candidate. At the next general election, only the candidate so declared or nominated may appear on the ballot, which shall present the question whether the candidate shall be elected. The candidate shall be elected upon receiving a majority of the votes on the question. A candidate not elected may not be appointed to that court but later may be nominated and elected.

(2) The Governor shall fill vacancies in those courts by appointment. An appointee holds office until the Monday after January 1 following the first general election at which the appointee had the right to become a candidate or until an elected judge qualifies. A nomination or appointment by the Governor is effective when confirmed by the Commission on Judicial Appointments.

(3) Electors of a county, by majority of those voting and in a manner the Legislature shall provide, may make this system of selection applicable to judges of superior courts.

Eighth—That Section 23 of Article VI is amended to read:

SEC. 23. (a) The purpose of the amendments to Sections 1, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, and 16, of this article, and the amendments to Section 16 of Article I, approved at the June 2, 1998, primary election is to permit the Legislature to provide for the abolition of the municipal courts and unify their operations within the superior courts. Notwithstanding Section 8 of Article IV, the implementation of, and orderly transition under, the



provisions of the measure adding this section may include urgency statutes that create or abolish offices or change the salaries, terms, or duties of offices, or grant franchises or special privileges, or create vested rights or interests, where otherwise permitted under this Constitution.

(b) When the superior and municipal courts within a county are unified, the judgeships in each municipal court in that county are abolished and the previously selected municipal court judges shall become judges of the superior court in that county. The term of office of a previously selected municipal court judge is not affected by taking office as a judge of the superior court. The 10-year membership or service requirement of Section 15 does not apply to a previously selected municipal court judge. Pursuant to Section 6, the Judicial Council may prescribe appropriate education and training for judges with regard to trial court unification.

(c) Except as provided by statute to the contrary, in any county in which the superior and municipal courts become unified, the following shall occur automatically in each preexisting superior and municipal court:

(1) Previously selected officers, employees, and other personnel who serve the court become the officers and employees of the superior court.

(2) Preexisting court locations are retained as superior court locations.

(3) Preexisting court records become records of the superior court.

(4) Pending actions, trials, proceedings, and other business of the court become pending in the superior court under the procedures previously applicable to the matters in the court in which the matters were pending.

(5) Matters of a type previously within the appellate jurisdiction of the superior court remain within the jurisdiction of the appellate division of the superior court.

(6) Matters of a type previously subject to rehearing by a superior court judge remain subject to rehearing by a superior court judge, other than the judge who originally heard the matter.

(7) Penal Code procedures that necessitate superior court review of, or action based on, a ruling or order by a municipal court judge shall be performed by a superior court judge other than the judge who originally made the ruling or order.

(d) This section shall remain in effect only until January 1, 2007, and as of that date is repealed.

